



United States  
Environmental  
Protection Agency  
Washington, D.C. 20460

Solid Waste  
and Emergency  
Response (5101)

EPA 500-F-00-186  
May 2000  
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*Outreach and Special Projects Staff (5105)*

*Brownfields Success Stories*

# Charlotte Maintains Redevelopment Momentum

## CHARLOTTE, NC

When the City of Charlotte was awarded a National Brownfields Assessment Pilot in 1996, the city's goal was to redevelop two or three properties. That number was increased to five targeted sites, of which two have been cleaned up and redeveloped, while the remaining three have cleanup and/or redevelopment activities underway. To date, the Charlotte Pilot has leveraged \$203,938 in cleanup and \$60,438 in assessment funding from public and private sources, as well as nearly \$14 million in redevelopment funding — a total expected to reach \$15 million once all five projects are completed.

The Charlotte Pilot targets brownfields in the city's Wilmore neighborhood and South End business district. The Pilot's first major success was the Camden Square Project, which has created space for planned restaurants, shops, and design-related businesses. Camden Square was also the first project to fall under the state's new Brownfields Property Reuse Act, which uses land use restrictions, risk-based cleanup standards, and liability protections to promote the redevelopment of brownfields.

The Pilot's latest success is the Gaines Brown Design Project, which focuses on a brownfields property located in Charlotte's Wilmore neighborhood. The operator of a exhibit design business in the Wilmore neighborhood had been looking to purchase this adjacent

*cont. →*

## JUST THE FACTS:

- In Charlotte's Wilmore neighborhood, the operator of an exhibit design business had been looking to purchase an adjacent property to renovate and lease.
- \$25,000 in Pilot funding was used to conduct a Phase II environmental assessment and design a cleanup plan.
- A restaurant or upscale food store is now being considered for the site; twelve jobs are expected to be retained and six to eight jobs created.

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EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower states, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a site, or portion thereof, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. EPA is funding: assessment demonstration pilot programs (each funded up to \$200,000 over two years), to assess brownfields sites and to test cleanup and redevelopment models; job training pilot programs (each funded up to \$200,000 over two years), to provide training for residents of communities affected by brownfields to facilitate cleanup of brownfields sites and prepare trainees for future employment in the environmental field; and, cleanup revolving loan fund programs (each funded up to \$500,000 over five years) to capitalize loan funds to make loans for the environmental cleanup of brownfields. These pilot programs are intended to provide EPA, states, tribes, municipalities, and communities with useful information and strategies as they continue to seek new methods to promote a unified approach to site assessment, environmental cleanup, and redevelopment.

property to renovate and lease to design-related businesses. The parcel he chose is located on the site of a former radiator shop, which had been vacant for more than ten years due, in part, to unknown levels of lead contamination in the soil. \$25,000 in Pilot funding was used to conduct a Phase II environmental assessment and design a cleanup plan. The assessment revealed that a portion of the site was in fact clean, enabling the operator to purchase that area of the property. A restaurant or upscale food store is being considered for the site; twelve jobs are expected to be retained and six to eight additional jobs created as a result of this project. The operator has since purchased the remaining portion of the parcel, demolished the existing radiator shop, and removed the contaminated soil.

Previous successes for the Charlotte Brownfields Pilot include the Thomas Construction Company property, which also housed a radiator shop that left the soil contaminated with lead. The Pilot performed assessments and created a plan for site cleanup that allowed Thomas Construction to remove contaminated soil and renovate an existing building for its own use. This brownfield was restored to productive use with a mere \$7,500 in assessment funding from the EPA Pilot; the project expects to retain fourteen jobs while creating nine new positions.

Thanks to EPA's Brownfields Initiative, Charlotte has returned these formerly idle sites to tax-base enhancements for the city, and provided much-needed employment opportunities in an area where 27 percent of residents live below the poverty line. As word of these successes has spread to the real estate and redevelopment communities, there has been a dramatic increase in the Wilmore neighborhood's marketability. Residents are now being inundated with offers to sell their properties. Local City Council member Patrick Cannon pointed out that "It's a great sign that outsiders are realizing what the potential is...my concern is that a lot of folks might sell without knowing what a gold mine they're sitting on." (The Charlotte Observer, 7/12/98)

## **CONTACTS:**

City of Charlotte  
(704) 336-4522

U.S. EPA - Region 4  
(404) 562-8661

Visit the EPA Brownfields web site at:  
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>

# CHARLOTTE